## OUR SHORT STORY PAGE

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isn't often that a town like Kilo has a real journalist in its midst, and when it does have, it ought to be proud and thankful; but right at first Kilo was more dazed and startled than anything else. I should say that Kilo, when it acquired the real journalist, was like a nice, motherly old cow that had gone out into the back pasture with the best and mildest inten-

tions in the world to have an ordinary, gentle, wob-bly-legged calf, and then found, all of a sudden, that she had given birth to a wheelbarrow loaded with fireworks. Lighted fireworks at that; with pin-wheels, and Roman candles, and skyrockets, and red and blue lights all going off at once. At first that cow would be surprised, then she would be pained and disappointed, and then she would probably get used to it. Next to a hen or the American Public the cow is the biggest fool on earth, and will get used to anything, even a yellow journalist.

When Thomas Jefferson Jones sold the Kilo Times he had been editing and publishing it and working the old Washington hand press for about ten years, and he had made it one of the most slowgoing, respectable, desicated weekly papers in Middle Iowa, one of the kind that, if he was sick some week, he could reprint week before last's paper and papedy would notice the difference and Kilo had a nobody would notice the difference; and Kilo had got used to that kind of paper and liked it.

But Davis was a different sort of man. He saw that the Times needed a little life put into it, and he put it in. On the paper for which Davis had been he put it in. On the paper for which Davis had been setting type before he came to Kilo, life meant redink headlines, and scandal and crime on the first page, and the very first number of the Times, he got out had a "Wave of Crime" headline across the top of the first page in red, with subheads of "Kilo Police Rankly Inefficient," and "The Criminal Still At Large." That was the best he could do with the news at hand, which was that a chicken had been stolen from Doc Weaver's hen coop, but he made up for it by a startling "Later" item at the bottom of the page, in double-spaced lines, telling that just as the Times was going to press it was learned that the chicken had not been stolen, but had been discovered by Mrs. Doc Weaver under the back porch, covered by Mrs. Doc Weaver under the back porch, setting on eleven eggs.

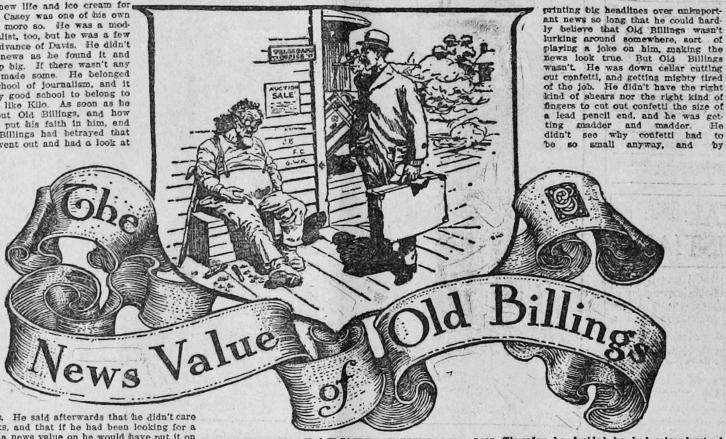
Davis hadn't been publishing the Times more than a month and a half before he saw that it was going to strain him to keep up the speed he had set

The minute Davis stepped off the train when he came to Kilo he set his eyes on Old Billings, and gave him his proper news value. There was Old Billings, bunched up on an egg case against the side of the depot, right in the heat of the sun, with his hat slipped down onto the platform and his head lolling over onto one shoulder, and snoring like an automobile horn, with a grunt on the full blest ear automobile horn, with a grunt on the full blest ear. bile horn, with a grunt on the full blast and a trem-olo on the in-take, and his face and nose as red as the side of the Kilo Livery, Feed and Sale Stable.

Nobody can deny that Old Billings looked drunk. Mobody can deny that Old Blilings looked drunk. If Mrs. Jarley had wanted to make a waxwork figure and had made one with a palpitator inside of it to make the chest rise and fall, and a tooler to snore, and had called it "Sleeping Off His Intoxication." she couldn't have done better than to copy Old Bil-lings just as he looked when Davis stepped from the train. Old Billings was a perfect imitation of him-self as he would have looked if he had been dead drunk, only he wasn't drunk, and never had been dead his life. He was a tectotal, hard-shell, blue-ribbon, down prohibitionist. I don't wonder it riled Davis. News values were one of the things Davis was

especially strong on. A man who is a modern jour-nalist, with gallons of red ink and fourteen assorted fonts of wooden scare-head type has to be strong on

It was new life and ice cream for Davis, for Casey was one of his own kind, only more so. He was a modern journalist, too, but he was a few years in advance of Davis. He didn't take the news as he found it and swell it up big. If there wasn't any news, he made some. He belonged to that school of journalism, and it is a pretty good school to belong to in a town like Kilo. As soon as he heard about Old Billings, and how Davis had put his faith in him, and how Old Billings had betrayed that fath he great out and had a look at faith, he went out and had a look at



Old Billings. He said afterwards that he didn't care for his looks, and that if he had been looking for a man to put a news value on he would have put it on someone else; but that he had worked under many an editor and he knew they were all more or less crazy, and that Davis was boss. If Old Billings was the kind of man Davis had picked out as having a news value, the thing to do was not to complain, but to get the the news out of Old Billings. Then he asked Davis about how high he had set Old Billings' news value, and when he heard, he sat down and whistled one long whistle and scratched his head. It looked like a good deal of news to get out of Old

The next number of the *Times'* had plenty of red ink, and the words at the top of the first page were "The Carnival!" It took Kilo by storm, and made more talk than anything since the Civil War. Kilo hadn'i known they work the civil war. hadn't known there was going to be a carnival, but it was all set forth in the Times so there could be no doubt about it. It was to be a merchants' carnival; a tremendous celebration in honor of Kilo's prosperity, and there were to be floats, the populace in costume, and decorated streets, and fireworks in in costume, and decorated streets, and fireworks in the evening, and the day was to be the 1st of October. Casey wrote the whole thing, and had an Order of March for the parade, and the whole thing order of March for the parade, and the whole thing was as attractive as it could be in print. By the time the Times, came out again, a week later, everyone was pretty well used to the idea, and Casey called it the Times Carnival without anyone caring, and it brightened Davis up consideraby to go around and talk the thing up with the merchants. Casey just took things easily. All he did was to sit around in front of the grocery, or the livery stable; of the hotel, and loaf: but he always happened to sit or the hotel, and loaf; but he always happened to sit next to Old Billings

"Have ye ever been to Paris, Mister Billings?" he



" 'I Could Cut Out a Lot of Confetti, I Wisht You'd Let Me Try R, Mr. Casey."

news values. Davis was. He could tell the news news values. Davis was, the could tell the news value of anything at the first glance. Davis could look at a man or woman once and give that person his or her news value, and he was proud of the faculty. So, as soon as he saw Old Billings asleep on station platform, he gave him his news value and it was a big one. He expected Old Billings to furnish a great many pages of scare-heads during each year. Old Billings asleep there looked like "orime" and "debauchery" and "our dissipated leisare classes" all in one, and Davis expected him to

After Davis had been publishing the Kilo Times a few months he began to look worried. The strain of getting up a red-type sensation for his first page every week in a town where nothing happened was beginning to tell on him, and all his efforts to do the modern journalistic thing had not boomed his cir-culation the way he had thought it would. The Times had had one hundred and six more or less paying subscribers when Thomas Jefferson Jones sold out, and after several months of Davis it had one hundred and seven; but Davis learned that the new one was less paying than any of the others. Kilo did not appreciate red ink, and that worried Davis; and news was hard to get, and that worried him; and the advertisements were actually fewer in number than they had ever been, and that made him mad.

But the thing that he hated worst of all was that Old Billings hadn't lived up to his news value. It seemed to cast a clur on Davis's journalistic ability and presight. Old Billings didn't do a thing that would look even plausibly like news in the Times
He never had done much in the news-making line except to be born, and he couldn't help that. The only other news he seemed liable to furnish was a death notice, and at the slow, easy-going rate he was living, it looked as though he would outlive Davis. Billings wasn't wasting any energy. He generally sat down in front of the hotel, or the grocery, or the livery stable, in the morning and sat here until ucon; and then sat in front of the depot until supper, and after that he sat in front of the grocery, or the livery stable, or the hotel, until bedtime. It was not a wearing life; not the nervous prostration kind. Hardly anyone died of nervous prostration in Kilo, but it began to look as if Davis would; Old Billings were stable, or the hotel, until bedtime.

And then, just as Davis had about decided that his health was giving out entirely, his only compositor wandsred out of town and never came back. For two weeks Dayls struggled along weakly, trying to set type as well as hustle news and keep an eye on Old Billings; and the day he took to his bed. deciding that he was going to die of it all. Casey wan dered into Kilo and hunted up the Times office-which wasn't very hard to find-and struck Davis

said one day, when they were sitting together.

"Well, no, I ain't," admitted Old Billings, reluctantly. "I don't say but what I've thought some of
travelin', but I ain't never seemed to find time, as

you might say. Travelin' takes time."
"Now, but ain't that a pity!" said Casey. "I was hopin' ye had teen. I was there once, whin I was young, an' I was just wishin' you had been. Them French do be knowin' how to run a carnival better than what Davis does. I'm disappointed ye ain't seen a Paris carnival, Mister Billings. Ye would be kind of a man could tell Davis a thing or two

guess maybe I could," said Old Billings with "I guess maybe I conta, said out buildes satisfaction. "I got a remarkable mem'ry for things. I remember in the fall o' sixty-eight—"
"If ye had been to Paris," said Casey, "ye could be a said contained to the said conta

tell Davis about that there confetti. An' ye would do so. No one that has been to Paris, like ye would have been, would forget to tell Davis about that there confetti. 'Twould be th' first thing ye would

"I guess I wouldn't let nothin' much stand in the way of my tellin' him," said Old Billings. "Don't you reckon he knows about that there-that what-you may-call-it?"

"He do not!" said Casey, positively. "How should he, an' him never havin' been to Paris. I wager there be no one in Kilo but you an' me do know about it, dister Billings. An' a grand sight it is, to be sure, to see the air full o' it, an' th' streets covered with it! Ah! 'tis a pity we are to have none of it here with the carnival an' all! Have ye ever been on th' boulevards in Paris come Mardi Gras? but, no! I remind me ye say ye have not! Confetti! 'Tis nothin' but confetti, an' 'tis plenty of carnival with nothin' else but confetti. I would no give a dang for a carnival without confetti, Mr. Billings, would

"Dog me, if I would!" said Old Billings. "I'm s'prised Davis ain't thought on it afore now."

Casey waved his hand in the air to dismiss Davis

Ye know what he is like!" he said. "Thinkin' of nothin' but thim red headlines o' his. I wisht-I

He paused wistfully on the word, and then his face brightened and he turned to Old Billings and lowered his voice to a whisper.

"An' why not have confetti?" he exclaimed. "There

would be good money in it for some one, Mr. Billings, if they had a monopoly of th' confetti business for th' Kilo carnival! Th' people would be after goin' crazy over it, they would take to it so. Ten cents a bag we could get for it, an' to think it costs nothin' to make! But, no!" he said, letting his face grow sad again; "I have not th' time t' make it."

Old Billings moved restlessly on his chair.

## By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

"Twould do no good t' have a wee bit of it," said Casey, sadly. "We would be all sold out of it before th' middle of th' day. "Twould take ons of it, th' people would be so crazy to get it. 'Tis no use thinkin' of it. Let it go!"

"Seems like a pity not to make money when there is a chanst to," said Old Billings, nervously. "Might-n't-mightn't I make some confetti, Mr. Casey?"

"An' listen to that, now!" exclaimed Casey, joyfully. "Sure, it takes you t' think of things, Mr.
Billings! But no!" he said, dropping into sadness as
suddenly as he had been roused to joy, "tis not t' be
thought of. Ye would get tired before th' job was
half done, Mr. Billings. It takes a lot o' confetti t' make enough for a carnival, an' too little is worse than none at all. Ye would tire out before ye made enough, Mr. Billings. Let, it go!"

"I wouldn't tire out," said Old Billings, eagerly.

"Makin' confetti ain't no harder than sawin' wood, is it?' I used t' be a fine wood-sawer when I was young. I hadn't my beat at sawin' wood, them days." He waited restlessly for Casey's reply, and Casey sat rubbing one ear and apparently thinking deeply. "If I thought ye could stick to th' job-" he said

"I'd stick!" said Old Billings. "I swan I'd stick. Dog me if I wouldn't! What-what might this here

Dog me if I wouldn't! What—what might this here confetti be like?"

"Snow," said Casey. "It's like paper snow, an' when ye're havin' a carnival ye throw it at each other 'till th' streets is full of it. That's th' beauty of havin' the monopoly of th' confetti business, Mr. Billings. Ye can make it of nawthin' more expensive

than old waste paper, an' th' profit is all profit. "Tis a grand business for th' likes of us."

"I can tear up paper as well as another man," began Old Billings, but Casey stopped him.
"Tear it!" he exclaimed. "An' who ever heard of torn-up confetti? 'Twould be agin th' law, Mr. Billings. Would th' law be allowin' ye t' throw around torn paper, with th' sharp corners of it gettin' into everybody's eye, an' mebby puttin' out a hundred eyes or so? No, indeed! 'Tis round th' confetti has to be; each confetti as big around as th' blunt end of a lead pencil. 'Twould never do t' tear it; 'twould have t' be cut."

And what would I cut it with?" asked Old Bil-

"Scissors," said Casey. "But 'twould be no expense, for we have two pair in th' Times, office, an' I could sneak ye one pair when Davis wasn't lookin'. To have fine long fingers t' work a pair of shears with, Mr. Billings!"

Old Billings worked his rheumatic fingers open and shut, and looked at them with more pride than he

had ever imagined they could give him.
"I could cut out a lot of confetti, if so be I h time enough and paper," he said wistfully. "I wisht

you'd let me try it, Mr. Casey."

"If I was t' git a room for a factory, now," said Casey, meditatively, I might git ahold of some young teller that would be willin' t' go into th' factory an' stay 'till I had enough confetti. I wouldn't want word of what I was doin' to get out 'till I had enough confetti, made to do for th' whole carnival. confetti made to do for th' whole carnival. An' a young feller I could lock in an' hand him in his Twould be a fine job for some young feller, nothin' to do but sit easy all day an' shear out confetti an' have his meals handed right in to him, an' him gettin' half of th' profit when we sold th' stuff. Ye don't know any young feller like that, do ye, Mr. Billings, that I could get hold of quick?"

Old Billings worked his fingers spryly open and shut in front of Casey's face.

"There ain't no young feller in Kilo got sich long fingers as them," he said braggingly, "ner no young feller ain't goin' t' have th' patience what I've got. A young feller's always wantin' t' move around, an' I ain't. Sittin' still's one of my strong points. You'd ought to take me as pardner in this here confetti business, Mr. Casey.'

"Well," said Casey reluctantly, "I ain't askin' ye go into it, an' I ain' coaxin' ye, an' if ye go into ye'll have t' be locked in like I would lock in a young feller.' "I ain't askin' nothin' better!" declared Old Bil-

Well, don't say nothin' about it," said Casey,

"Well, don't say nothin' about it," said Casey,
"an' come 'round to th' Times, office this evenin'
after supper, an' we'll get t' work at it."

That was Tuesday, and the Times came out
every Thursday, and the very next Thursday Old
Billings began to live up to his news value. Tuesday night Casey met Old Billings alone at the
Times office, and Thursday morning the "Times"
came out, with surphy and headlings on the first came out with superb red headlines on the first page. It was a "Mysterious Disappearance" of the most thrilling kind, and Davis was in his glory. He shook hands with Caser a dozen times on Wednesday between his visits to the usual sitting places of Old Billings, and thanked him for drawing his attention to Old Billings' absence from the well-worn public benches and chairs. He said he guessed that Old Billings had got the fishing fever and had gone to the river after bass, but that he was good for a scare-head in Thursday's paper anyway. And all the time Old Billings was down coller with a keroe the time Old Billings was down cellar with a kero-sene lamp and a pair of office shears fourteen inches long and weighing about a pound, cutting out con-fettl the size of the end of a lead pencil. He cut nearly a cigar box full Wednesday.

Thursday morning Kilo read the Times and snifted disdainfully about the mysterious disappearance of Old Billings, and then went down to the grocery to talk it over with him, but he wasn't there! Kilo was surprised, but not half so surprised as Dav-is was. He couldn't make it out. He had been

noon Thursday he decided he had misunderstood Casey, and he increased the size a little. He made it the size of a dime. And about the time Davis was really getting excited over the disappearance of Old Billings and taking it seriously, Old Billings decided that, while confetti the size of a dime might do for Paris, what was wanted for America was a generous Paris, what was wanted for America was a generous confetti the size of a silver dollar. He felt that it would be mean to disappoint the public by giving them stingy, little bits when they might be wanting large, round ones; so he made them that way. He felt that if anyone had deprayed Parisian taste and wanted the small kind, it would be easier for them to cut it down to suit than it would be for the others and the little annual that the little annual tha to paste the little ones together if they wanted big

When Casey came down cellar with Old Billings' dinner at noon, the old man had grown so generous that his confetti was the size of a saucer, but the to the dimensions of a hunting-case watch, men's

Size.

Friday morning Davis was in his glory, and said that if Old Billings did not show up by the next morning he would actually get out an extra, and Kilo was in a good state to receive one, for Old Billings was still absent.

Saturday was a hard day for Casey. He had to run off the extra on the hand press, and Old Billings was grumbling so hard that he had to sing Rory OlMoore at the top of his voice all day. Davis thought it was pure happiness because the *Times* had such good news, but it wasn't; and Casey was never so glad in his life as when he shut up the of-Saturday night.

Old Billings started to tear the confetti, and he tore hopefully all day. It was really amazing how much he could tear when he hadn't anything to distract his mind. By evening he had the floor of the whole bare space in the cellar ankle deep in confetti, and it cheered him on to see how well he was get-

ting along. It was warm work, even if the cellar was cooler than out doors, and Old Billings had shed his coat right at the start; and about Tuesday, as Old Bil-lings did not seem to need it, Casey just took it out of his way and, after supper, walked out to the river—three miles—and sort of draped it over the edge of the river. Davis found it there, all right! And Casey saw that he found it early enough Wednesday morning to work up a good article for the Thursday

It was right then that Kilo really began to worry out Old Billings. meeting, and went in a body to drag the river, with Davis along to show the spot where the coat had been found and to take notes. They dragged the river well, and got out every old bait can that had

found, people all over the United States were read-ing of Kilo's murder mystery, and was it murder or

Suicide!

Kilo was prouder than a peacock of her murder mystery, and especially when the county sheriff came down from Jofferson and joined in the hunt for the remains of Old Billings; and Davis was like a new man. He hardly had time to eat. He ran around town and discovered clues everywhere, and Caran myster as hard turning out extra eddions of around town and discovered clues everywhere, and Casey worked so hard turning out extra editions of the Times that he scarcely had time to feed Old Billings properly, He spent all his time between the press and the cellar, for the old man was getting restless again. He had torn up so much paper that he was up to his arms in it, and he told Casey that he didn't want to seem lazy about making confetti, but that from what he knew of Kilo he judged he had about all the confetti the town would need for a one-day carnival, and that if he core up much more he would be swamped and would likely drown in be would be swamped and would likely drown in confetti. He became quito ugly about it, so Casey suggested to Davis that he had got about the full news value out of Old Billings, and it would be a good thing to let him drop now, and try some other

But Davis knew better. He was right in the heart of the mystery, and he wasn't going to give up while a mystery was still mysterious; so Casey had to go down cellar and try to start Old Billings going again. It was hard work. Old Billings said he had used up the whole pile of old exchanges, and he thought that was more than any young fellow could have done. Old Billings sat on the table growling to himself for a while after Casey went upstairs, and then he took up one of the papers that Casey had just brought down, and the headlines looked at him. He did not have to look at them, for they were Davis's Times headlines, and they dairly yelled at Old Billings that Old Billings was murdered, and that he was the prize mystery of the century. Old Billings thought it over for a few minutes and then he climbed as far up the cellar stairs as he could and pounded on the underside of the trapdoor with the shears. Casey let the press stop and came with the shears. Casey let the press stop and came down. He saw at once what was the matter and what a mistake he had made in not censoring the exchanges before he had handed them to Old Bill-

But Davis knew better. He was right in the heart

"If ye was up there, there wouldn't be any excitement," said Casey. "Ye can't be murdered an stand 'round listenin' to how ye was murdered at the same time, Mr. Billings. If ye hadn't been down here ye wouldn't have been murdered up there, an as long as ye are in good health ye oughtn't to complain. Be a good feller and make some more confetti." Casey sat down on the stairs and looked at Old

Casey sat down on the stairs and looked at Old Billings sadly.

"An' spoil th' monopoly!" he said. "Go on out then, an' have everybody know about confett, an' have every livin' soul in Kilo start to make their own before night! Go on, Mr. Billings! An' to th' dickens with our profits!"

"I'm goin' out." repeated Old Billings, doggedly.

"I'm goin' out," repeated Old Billings, doggedly.
"Go on out then!" urged Casey. "An' in half an hour thim sheriffs an' marshals an' all will find out where ye have been, an' ye will be th' joke of th' town an' laughed at, an' no mystery at all, an' our confetti monopoly all gone t' smash. I didn't think it of ye, Mr. Billings. "Tis not what I would do."
"I'm a-goin' out," refterated Old Billings.
"An' you just gittin' t' have th' finest news value of any man in Killo!" exclaimed Casey disgustedly.

An you just gittin't have th' finest news value of any man in Kilo!" exclaimed Casey, disgustedly. "Is that th' way ye do in Kilo? Is that th' way ye do, when ye could go out just as ye wish an' still have thim look on ye with wonder an' awe, an' not spoil th' confetti monopoly?"

"I want to go out," said Old Billings.
"An' where will ye say below all the lines."

"An' where will ye say ye have been all this time? In Davis's cellar tearin' up confett! An' so would I. In Davis's cellar tearin' up confett! An' so'would I, Mr. Billings, if I was in yer place, but I would not say it that way. I would let them find me in th' cellar, an' not a word would I say about confett! 'Sure,' I would say,' is this me or not me? Am I Old Billings, or am I a rat?' Then they all looks surprised and interested. 'A rat?' they says. 'Yes,' ye says, 'am I a rat, or ain't I? The last I remember I was a rat.' An' then they points to th' paper ye have torn up an' they say, 'sure, he thinks he is a rat! 'Tis a wonderful upsettin' of th' mind he has had. Some one must have took him out in th' woods an' soaked him on th' head an' upset his mind for a an' soaked him on th' head an' upset his mind for a spell.' Ye would be havin' a full page or two in th' Times, about it," said Casey, enthusiastically, "an' no one would guess this was confetti at all. We could had one the property."

"T won't be a rat," said Old Billings grumpily.

"Well, then," said Casey, coaxingly, "be a squirrel is a pretty animal. Ye ought t' like

t' be one, Mr. Billings." "I won't be a squirrel," said Old Billings.
"Then will ye be a nice little bird, makin' a pretty nest in th' cellar. Be a canary bird, Mr. Billings," coaxed Casey.



"The Men of the Town Held a Meeting and Went in a Body to Drag the Kiver."

been chucked into it in the last seven years, and it was a wonder they didn't drag out Old Billings. They would have dragged him out if he hadn't been in the cellar of the "Times" building, wading around knee deep in confettl. But it made a good extra for the "Times," and by the time Old Billings was thigh deep in torn-up exchanges, Kilo was reading the list of the men who had dragged the river, and the blography of Old Billings, and the full account of the dragging of the river. Casey was so proud of it that

he took Old Billings's vest. You can do a good deal with a vest if you know how, and have had a thorough, modern journalistic education, and can pick up a stray chicken that needs its head chopped off for the good of the public. There is enough blood in a chicken to make a strong, agile murder mystery if it is applied in the right way; and the way Casey had Davis organize the search party to scour the woods on the other side of the river from where the coat had been found, did credit to his training. Kilo had not been mentioned in the big city papers since the cyclone of '78, but the day after Old Billings's vest was

"I will be nothing!" declared Old Billings. "I will be nothing but what I am, and be doing nothing but

making confetti." For a minute Casey considered. "Well, go on, then," he said, standing aside to let Old Billings out, "I'm thinkin' they will think ye as crazy one way as the other. From what I have seen of Kilo, by th' time ye explain t' them what confetti might be, an' how ye expect t' make money by sellin' folks bits o' torn-up paper, an' how ye was will-in' t' stay down cellar tearin' paper by th' light of a

lamp week in an' week out, I guess they'll think yo are crazy enough." That night Davis sat alone in his office with his head in his hands and a frown on his brow. He was deeply worried. He could not decide which headlines to run in red ink at the top of the next day's issue of the "Times," whether to run "Strange Aberration" or "The Lost Returns." Then suddenly he ration or "The Lost Returns." Then suddenly he smiled and scribbled across the pad before him the huse words "Mysterious Disappearance." For Casey had left Kilo suddenly, and without stopping to say good-by, or to pay his board bill at the Kilo Hotel.